



FEATHERS WHARF DEVELOPMENT
A response by Wandle Valley Forum to Wandsworth Council
Application number 2017/0255

February 2017

Wandle Valley Forum was established in 2005 and is the primary consultative forum on Wandle Valley issues for the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust; the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon; Greater London Authority and other statutory bodies

1. Wandle Valley Forum has been engaged in the plans for extending the existing facilities at Feathers Wharf, including plans to provide a public walkway along both the Wandle and Thames, because of their significant implications for the Wandle delta - one of the most important sites in the Wandle Valley. We have considered the proposals in the context of the existing and emerging development plan policies for the area and commented on the planning application consented in November 2015 (Ref 2015/4784) and these proposals at pre-application stage.
2. The redevelopment plans provide an opportunity to realise the longstanding vision of public access along the side of both the Wandle and the Thames at the location where the Wandle Trail and Thames Path meet in the Wandle Valley Regional Park. Opening up the walkway around the site, including the high level route, would bring immense public benefit and address the highly significant gap in the Wandle Trail between Smugglers Way and the mouth of the river. It also provides a means of implementing longstanding plans for a pocket park at the mouth of the Wandle. We recognise that this development raises other issues, especially for local residents, but focus our comments on the questions of public access and open space.
3. We welcome the revised plans *“to provide the new river walkway along with new landscaping and biodiversity benefits”* and it is important that these are delivered in a manner which recognises the significance of the location. Delivery of a walkway alongside the two rivers is a modest element of this major development, especially given that much of the necessary infrastructure is already in place, and we believe more ambitious proposals are needed.
4. This strategic site needs space to breathe and provision of just linear access is not sufficient. We urge the development of a pocket park at the meeting of the Thames and Wandle. This would be of strategic value to Wandsworth town centre and provide a high profile vantage point for the community and visitors to enjoy the westerly views of the Thames and over the 'wildlife tranquility zone' on the Wandle's east bank. It also realises the long held Wandsworth Town Centre Partnership ambition to grow the town centre

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organically towards the Thames. An open space at the confluence of Wandsworth's two rivers is an obvious asset to the town centre's attractiveness to both visitors and the local community. Public open space in this location has been a community aspiration for decades, it was confirmed in the Local Plan and it can now be realised through this development. The existing car park can be readily relocated to sites in the ownership of the local authority.

5. The development plan is clear in its requirement for a new area of open space at the mouth of the Wandle and states that *“the area at the northern end of the site by the Wandle mouth should be specifically designed to provide a generous open space and should be a place with distinctive character and identity for the public to enjoy.”* (3.3.6 Feathers Wharf, Wandsworth SSAD February 2012 & repeated in 2014). The 2011 Inspector's report states in relation to Feather's Wharf that *“A more substantial area of open space is also required to be provided at the point where the routes meet and the site can thus contribute to public enjoyment as well as helping to meet overall development targets”*.

6. We also seek plans which:

- Provide a minimum 6m wide walkways (for both walking and cycling)
- Ensure appropriate protection and enhancement of the river bank and the wildlife value of the area
- Offer appropriate interpretation – including through public art – which is consistent with a sensitive wildlife site and enhances the public realm
- Provide lighting sensitive to the wildlife value of the site and avoiding light pollution.
- Dedicate both the walkway and additional open space as a public right of way and for public use in perpetuity. This could be secured through designation of the pocket park as a “town green” or through legal covenants such as those used by Fields in Trust.

About Wandle Valley Forum

Wandle Valley Forum brings together people and organisations that care for the River Wandle and its diverse network of open spaces. We provide support and an independent voice for over 100 community groups & voluntary organisations and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle. Wandle Valley Forum monitors planning applications for developments which impact on the special qualities and character of the Wandle Valley. We make representations on developments which raise Valley-wide issues by reason of their strategic significance or potential to set a precedent.